DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 112 799 HE 006 848

AUTHOR Thrift, Julianne Still; Fidler, Paul P.
TITLE A Descriptive Study of Commuter Students at the University of South Carolina, Fall 1974. Research Notes No. 25-75.
INSTITUTION South Carolina Univ., Columbia.
REPORT NO RN-25-75
PUB DATE 11 Jul 75
NOTE 19p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS Campuses; *Commuting Students; *Higher Education; Questionnaires; Student Attitudes; *Student College Relationship; *Student Needs; *Student Participation; Student Responsibility; Students; Surveys
IDENTIFIERS *South Carolina

ABSTRACT

During the fall of 1974, a questionnaire was administered to a random sample of 700 off-campus students at the main campus of the University of South Carolina who were enrolled in nine or more semester hours of course work (approximately 8 percent of the population). The goal of the study was to describe off-campus students including their perceived needs so that their input could be considered in decision-making processes. The results of the questionnaires were analysed to examine the students' views on the following issues: (1) the potential use of facilities on campus; (2) the desirability of a service and programming organization for commuters; (3) the relative importance of a variety of programs for commuters; (4) the degree of usage of various means of communication; (5) the amount of time spent on campus by commuters; and (6) the desirability of social functions planned for commuters. (Author/JMF)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED112799

SUBJECT: **A Descriptive Study of Commuter Students at the University of South Carolina, Fall 1974**

RESEARCH NOTES NO. 25-75 **July 11, 1975**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Principal Researchers: **Ms. Julianne Still Thrift**
Ombudsman and Former Coordinator for Off-Campus and Married Students

Dr. Paul P. Fidler
Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs

HE006848

Division of Student Affairs

Research Notes
No. 25-75 July 11, 1975

SUBJECT: A Descriptive Study of Commuter Students at the University of South Carolina, Fall 1974

Nature and Scope of Study

During the fall of 1974 a questionnaire (see Appendix A) was administered to a random sample of 700 off-campus students at the main campus of the University of South Carolina who were enrolled in nine or more semester hours of course work (approximately 8% of the population). The goal of the study was to describe off-campus students including their perceived needs so that their input could be considered in decision making processes.

The following is an analysis of the results of this questionnaire. The issues examined were the students' views on the following issues: (1) The potential use of facilities on campus, (2) The desirability of a service and programming organization for commuters, (3) The relative importance of a variety of programs for commuters, (4) The degree of usage of various means of communication, (5) The amount of time spent on campus by commuters, and (6) The desirability of social functions planned for commuters.

I. Facilities

At the time of this study, the University of South Carolina was in the beginning stages of a project to expand and remodel its Union Building. In order to have information concerning the degree of desirability of potential facilities, the following question was asked: "Would you use the following facilities if they were available on campus?" No significant differences were found between male and female responses.

TABLE 1

Percentages of students who would use various proposed facilities, by marital status.

	MARRIED	SINGLE	OTHER	TOTAL
Lounges with free telephones for local calls	91.0	92.2	85.7	92.0
Lockers	35.8	38.3	20.0	36.9
Day beds in lounges	11.8	38.2	20.0	26.3
Mail boxes	28.8	40.7	20.0	35.6
Study lounges in libraries	77.6	90.1	66.7	84.7

Comments:

1. Students were more likely to use lounges with free telephones for local calls (92.0%) and study lounges in libraries (84.7%) than other proposed facilities.
2. In every case, single students were more likely than married students to respond they would use the proposed facilities.

TABLE 2

Percentage of students who would use various proposed facilities, by classification.

	FRESHMAN	SOPHOMORE	JUNIOR	SENIOR	GRADUATE	TOTAL
Lounges with free telephones for local calls	94.4	100.0	97.8	90.7	81.8	92.0
Lockers	45.2	48.3	38.5	20.0	33.3	36.9
Day beds in lounges	40.6	29.6	31.6	25.0	12.8	29.3
Mail boxes	59.4	33.3	32.5	38.1	20.8	35.6
Study lounges in libraries	93.8	90.3	81.4	85.7	76.4	84.7

Comments:

1. In every case, greater percentages of undergraduates than graduate students responded that they would use proposed facilities.

2. Seniors were less likely to report that they would use lounges with free telephones for local calls, lockers and day beds in lounges than other undergraduates.
3. The majority of freshmen reported that they would use mailboxes if available on campus.

Organization for Commuters

A group of students within the USC Student Government Association has been investigating the feasibility of establishing a commuter student organization. They have studied similar organizations at other universities, but have received little substantial data on the level of interest for such an organization among the students. For this reason the following two questions were asked: "How important do you think it is that a service and programming organization be designed specifically for off-campus students?" and "Would you be an active participant in such an organization?" No distinguishing differences were found in male and female responses.

TABLE 3

Importance of a service and programming organization specifically for commuters, by marital status.

	MARRIED	SINGLE	OTHER	TOTAL
Very important	29.5	45.0	42.9	38.8
Somewhat important	59.0	45.0	57.1	51.5
Not important	11.5	10.0	0.0	9.7

Percentage of students who would actively participate in a service and programming organization specifically for commuters, by marital status.

MARRIED	SINGLE	OTHER	TOTAL
43.8	56.8	66.7	53.0

Comments:

1. About 90% of all respondents reported that a service and programming organization would be somewhat or very important to them.
2. Even though similar percentages of single and married students responded that a service and programming organization would be somewhat or very important to them, single students were more likely to report that such an organization was very important to them.
3. A majority of all respondents reported that they would actively participate in such an organization.
4. A majority of single students (56.8%) reported that they would actively participate in such an organization compared to only 43.8% of married respondents.

TABLE 4

Importance of a service and programming organization specifically for commuters, by classification.

	FRESHMAN	SOPHOMORE	JUNIOR	SENIOR	GRADUATE	TOTAL
Very important	51.4	32.4	40.0	51.2	25.9	38.8
Somewhat important	37.1	52.9	53.3	44.2	62.1	51.5
Not important	11.4	14.7	6.7	4.7	12.1	9.7

Percentage of students who would participate in a service and programming organization specifically for commuters, by classification.

FRESHMAN	SOPHOMORE	JUNIOR	SENIOR	GRADUATE	TOTAL
67.9	46.4	57.1	51.3	40.4	53.0

Comments:

1. Juniors and seniors were somewhat more likely than other commuters to view a service and programming organization specifically for commuters as important. However, freshmen and seniors were more likely to report that such an organization was very important to them.
2. Freshmen were more likely than other students to respond that they would actively participate in such an organization.

III. Services for Commuters

The Office for Off-Campus and Married Students in the Division of Student Affairs provides certain services for commuters. Because of limited personnel and financial resources it has become necessary to set priorities for services according to the importance attributed to them by students. For this reason the question was asked, "How important to you is it that these services be provided?"

TABLE 5

Degree of importance attributed to various University services for commuters, by sex.

	Very or Somewhat Important		
	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
The provision of shuttle buses to transport students from outlying campus parking lots	72.5	79.0	75.5
Encouragement and incentives to form carpools	65.3	72.8	68.6
Current information about campus events be more readily available	90.1	94.0	91.9
Aid be given to students in their search for off-campus housing (for students not living with parents)	83.3	83.9	83.6
Educational, cultural, and social events planned specifically for commuters	58.5	64.6	61.3

Comments:

1. Commuters reported that the most important service the University could provide would be current information about campus events. (Note: In 1972 efforts were made to provide commuters with better information by distributing *GAMECOCK* newspapers in the academic buildings and by erecting outdoor bulletin boards near commuter parking lots. Their efforts apparently did not solve the problem.)
2. Females were more likely than males to report each as important.

TABLE 6

Degree of importance attributed to various University services for commuters, by marital status.

	Very or Somewhat Important			
	MARRIED	SINGLE	OTHER	TOTAL
The provision of shuttle buses to transport students from outlying campus parking lots	70.9	78.3	71.5	75.4
Encouragement and incentives to form carpools	63.3	72.9	71.5	68.4
Current information about campus events be more readily available	82.3	96.9	85.7	91.7
Aid be given to students in their search for off-campus housing (for students not living with parents)	79.5	87.6	71.5	84.2
Educational, cultural, and social events planned specifically for commuters	55.2	66.6	71.5	61.4

Comments:

1. Single students attributed greater importance to each service for commuters than did married students.

TABLE 7

Degree of importance attributed to various University services for commuters, by classification.

	Very or Somewhat Important					
	FRESH.	SOPH.	JUNIOR	SENIOR	GRADUATE	TOTAL
The provision of shuttle buses to transport students from outlying campus parking lots	86.2	81.8	76.1	76.7	65.6	75.4
Encouragement and incentives to form carpools	61.1	67.6	69.6	76.7	70.2	68.4
Current information about campus events be more readily available	88.9	100.0	91.3	90.7	89.6	91.7
Aid be given to students in their search for off-campus housing (for students not living with parents)	88.6	85.3	82.2	79.1	86.2	84.2
Educational, cultural, and social events planned specifically for commuters	75.0	69.7	63.7	57.2	51.8	61.4

Comments:

1. Freshmen were more likely than other commuters to rank as important: 1) provision of shuttle buses to transport students from outlying campus parking lots; 2) aiding students in their search for off-campus housing; and 3) planning educational, cultural, and social events for commuters.
2. Commuter's assessment of the importance of educational, cultural, and social events declined as they progressed through college.

IV. Means of Distributing Information

The success of any project or service is dependent on the ability to inform the commuters of the services. For this reason commuters were asked, "How often do you use the following sources to become informed about campus events or services?"

TABLE 8

Percentage of students using various methods of information distribution, by sex.

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Departmental bulletin boards	91.5	90.8	91.2
THE GAMECOCK	91.7	91.6	91.7
Russell House bulletin boards	69.4	54.6	62.8
Outdoor bulletin boards	64.2	58.4	61.5

Comments:

1. Greater percentages of commuters utilized departmental bulletin boards and the student newspaper as sources of information than Russell House or outdoor bulletin boards.
2. Males reported using all sources of information systems in somewhat greater percentages than females.

TABLE 9

Percentage of students using various methods of information distribution, by marital status.

	MARRIED	SINGLE	OTHER	TOTAL
Departmental bulletin boards	92.1	90.7	83.6	90.9
THE GAMECOCK	94.7	93.0	71.5	92.9
Russell House bulletin boards	57.2	70.5	14.3	63.8
Outdoor bulletin boards	55.5	68.3	28.6	61.9

Comments:

1. Greater percentages of single students than married students utilized Russell House and outdoor bulletin boards for information on campus events.

TABLE 10

Percentages of students using various methods of information distribution, by classification.

	FRESHMEN	SOPHOMORE	JUNIOR	SENIOR	GRADUATE	TOTAL
Departmental bulletin boards	91.2	91.2	88.6	93.0	94.8	92.0
THE GAMECOCK	79.4	97.0	90.9	95.2	93.1	91.5
Russell House bulletin boards	71.5	71.4	57.7	76.8	46.4	63.1
Outdoor bulletin boards	69.7	67.6	68.8	65.2	40.4	60.3

Comments:

1. Seniors and graduate students were more likely than other commuters to use departmental bulletin boards as a means of obtaining information.
2. Smaller percentages of freshmen read *THE GAMECOCK* than did other respondents.
3. Freshmen gained information from departmental bulletin boards in greater percentages than they used any other medium of communication.
4. Graduate students used outdoor bulletin boards less than undergraduates.

V. Time of Departure from Campus

The University Union and other programming organizations often plan activities in the late afternoon and at night. For this reason commuters were asked, "On the average what time do you normally leave campus?" There were no significant differences found in the responses that could be contributed to marital status or sex.

TABLE 11

Time of leaving campus, by classification.

	UNDERGRADUATE	GRADUATE
Before noon	9.6	3.4
1 p.m.	21.0	5.2
2 p.m.	17.2	8.6
3 p.m.	22.9	10.3
4 p.m.	15.3	19.0
after 4 p.m.	14.0	53.4

Comments:

1. Over 90% of all commuters remain on campus after noon.
2. Undergraduates leave campus much earlier than do graduate students.
3. Graduate students are much more likely than undergraduates to remain on campus after 4 p.m. This may be the result of the greater number of graduate classes available only at night.
4. Approximately half of all undergraduates leave campus before 2 p.m.

VI. Interest in Social Functions for Commuters

Student Government Association planned to have a social function for commuters. In order to help SGA anticipate the level of interest in such an affair and to provide data helpful in setting a time for the function, the following question was asked: "Would you attend a social function specifically for commuters if it were held at these times?"

TABLE 12

Percentage of students who would attend social functions, by sex.

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Percentage who would attend a social function during the day	65.5	64.2	65.0
Percentage who would return to campus at night for a social function	58.3	51.6	56.5

Comments:

1. The majority of both sexes expressed interest in a social function for commuters.
2. Students reported that they would be more likely to attend a social function if it were held during the day than if they had to return at night for it.
3. Males were slightly more likely than females to respond that they would attend social functions at night.

TABLE 13

Percentage of students who would attend social functions, by marital status.

	MARRIED	SINGLE	OTHER	TOTAL
Percentage who would attend a social function during the day	56.6	70.7	66.7	65.0
Percentage who would return to campus at night for a social function	42.1	63.1	60.0	56.5

Comments:

1. Married students were less likely than single students to respond that they would attend a social function for commuters.

TABLE 14

Percentage of students who would attend social functions, by classification.

	FRESHMEN	SOPHOMORE	JUNIOR	SENIOR	GRADUATE
Percentage who would attend a social function during the day	69.7	71.0	68.2	70.7	54.4
Percentage who would return to campus at night for a social function	72.7	62.1	53.3	51.2	48.2

Comments:

1. The majority of all undergraduates in each class reported that they would attend a social function during the day or at night.
2. Undergraduates were more likely to respond that they would attend social functions than would their graduate student conterparts.
3. Commuters were less likely to report they would attend social functions at night as their classification increased.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Of all proposed facilities, commuters were most likely to indicate that they would use lounges with free telephones for local calls and study lounges in libraries. Single students were more likely than married students and undergraduates were more likely than graduate students to indicate they would use the proposed facilities.
2. Even though 90% of all respondents reported that a service and programming organization would be somewhat or very important to them, single students attributed a greater degree of importance to the organization than did married students. A majority of all respondents reported that they would be active participants in such an organization. Freshmen were more likely to respond that they would participate in a service and programming organization than upperclassmen or graduate students.
3. Of the services listed, commuters reported that the most important service the University could provide for them would be current information about campus events. Single students attributed greater importance to all services listed than did married students.
4. Commuters were more likely to utilize departmental bulletin boards and the student newspsper as sources of information than Russell House or outdoor bulletin boards. Seniors and graduate students were more likely than other commuters to use departmental bulletin boards as a source of information, while smaller percentages of freshmen read *THE GAMECOCK* than did other respondents.
5. Even though over 90% of all commuters remain on campus after noon, approximately half of all undergraduates leave campus before 2:00 p.m.
6. While the majority of commuters expressed interest in a social function for commuters, married students were less likely than single students to respond that they would participate. Commuters were less likely to report they would attend social functions as their classification increased.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A special emphasis should be given to providing study lounges in libraries and lounges with free telephones for local calls in the Russell House. The allocation of such space is considered a priority item for commuter students.
2. The Student Government Association should study more seriously the establishment of a service and programming organization for commuters. If such an organization were established, wide-spread publication should be provided to inform commuters of its existance.
3. The Division of Students Affairs should study new ways of providing information to commuters about current campus events.
4. Over 90% of all students use *THE GAMECOCK* and departmental bulletin boards as a source of information. At the same time, they report that the most important service the University could provide for commuters would be current information about campus events. Because of these findings *THE GAMECOCK* staff should re-examine their methods and points of distribution. The Division of Student Affairs and the Student Government Association should investigate ways to disbribute information about current campus events within academic departments.
5. Freshmen should be informed of available sources of campus information during the orientation process. *THE GAMECOCK* staff should make some additional effort to inform freshmen commuters of its existance.
6. In planning programs, the University Union should keep in mind that over two thirds of all students are commuters and that half of all undergraduate commuters leave campus before 2:00 p.m.
7. Since the majority of all commuters express interest in social functions, such events should be viewed as viable programming possibilities.

APPENDIX A
COMMUTER STUDENT OPINIONNAIRE

Dear U.S.C. Student:
In order that the needs of off-campus students can be identified and considered in decision making processes, the Student Affairs Division of The University of South Carolina has devised the following opinionnaire. This instrument is being sent to a random sample of commuter students and will require only a few minutes of your time to complete. When you have completed the opinionnaire, please return it in the enclosed self-addressed return envelope.

____Male	____Married	____Freshman	____Senior
____Female	____Single	____Sophomore	____Law
	____Other	____Junior	____Graduate

Immediately prior to enrolling in USC, I have lived in:

____South Carolina ____Another State ____Another Nation

1. Would you use the following facilities if they were available on campus?

	YES	NO
Lounges with free telephones for local calls	___	___
Lockers (currently existing)	___	___
Day beds in lounges	___	___
Mail boxes (currently existing)	___	___
Study lounges in libraries	___	___
Other (specify)_____		

2. How important do you think it is that a service and programming organization be designed specifically for off-campus students?
Not important____ Somewhat important____ Very important____
Would you be an active participant in such an organization? Yes___ No___

3. How important to you is it that:

	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
The University aid you in your transportation/parking problems by providing shuttle buses from outlying campus parking lots.	_____	_____	_____
The University should aid students in the formation of carpools.	_____	_____	_____
Current information about campus events be more readily available.	_____	_____	_____
Aid be given to students in their search for off-campus housing (for students not living with parents).	_____	_____	_____
Educational, cultural, and social events be planned specifically for commuters.	_____	_____	_____

4. How often do you use the following sources to become informed about campus events or services? Place a check in the column that most nearly represents your average usage.

	NEVER	MONTHLY	WEEKLY	TWICE A WEEK	DAILY
Departmental bulletin boards	____	_____	_____	_____	____
THE GAMECOCK	____	_____	_____	_____	____
Russell House bulletin boards	____	_____	_____	_____	____
Outdoor bulletin boards	____	_____	_____	_____	____

5. A) On the average what time do you normally leave campus?
____before noon ____1 p.m. ____2 p.m. ____3 p.m. ____4 p.m. ____after 4 p.m.
B) On the average how often do you return to campus after 6:00 p.m.?
____more than once a week ____once a week ____once a month ____less than once a month

6. Would you attend a social function specifically for commuters (such as a wine and

_____South Carolina _____Another State _____Another Nation

1. Would you use the following facilities if they were available on campus?

	YES	NO
Lounges with free telephones for local calls	___	___
Lockers (currently existing)	___	___
Day beds in lounges	___	___
Mail boxes (currently existing)	___	___
Study lounges in libraries	___	___
Other (specify)_____		

2. How important do you think it is that a service and programming organization be designed specifically for off-campus students?
Not important_____ Somewhat important_____ Very important_____
Would you be an active participant in such an organization? Yes___ No___

3. How important to you is it that:

	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
The University aid you in your transportation/parking problems by providing shuttle buses from outlying campus parking lots.	_____	_____	_____
The University should aid students in the formation of carpools.	_____	_____	_____
Current information about campus events be more readily available.	_____	_____	_____
Aid be given to students in their search for off-campus housing (for students not living with parents).	_____	_____	_____
Educational, cultural, and social events be planned specifically for commuters.	_____	_____	_____

4. How often do you use the following sources to become informed about campus events or services? Place a check in the column that most nearly represents your average usage.

	NEVER	MONTHLY	WEEKLY	TWICE A WEEK	DAILY
Departmental bulletin boards	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
THE GAMECOCK	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Russell House bulletin boards	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Outdoor bulletin boards	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

5. A) On the average what time do you normally leave campus?
____before noon ____1 p.m. ____2 p.m. ____3 p.m. ____4 p.m. ____after 4 p.m.
B) On the average how often do you return to campus after 6:00 p.m.?
____more than once a week ____once a week ____once a month ____less than once a month

6. Would you attend a social function specifically for commuters (such as a wine and cheese party) if it were held:
a) during the day while you were on campus? ____Yes ____No
b) at night and meant returning to campus? ____Yes ____No

7. Please use the back of this questionnaire to let us know of other concerns you have as commuters.

APPENDIX B

Characteristics of Respondents

		Frequency	Percentage
Sex			
	Male	122	54.7
	Female	101	45.3
Marital Status			
	Married	79	36.2
	Single	132	60.6
	Other	7	3.2
Classification			
	Freshman	36	16.4
	Sophomore	35	16.0
	Junior	46	21.0
	Senior	43	19.6
	Graduate	47	21.5
	Law	12	5.5
Residency			
	South Carolina	178	78.8
	Another State	45	19.9
	Another Nation	2	0.9
	No Response	1	0.4
Total Sample Size		231	100.0